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FM AMEMBASSY YEREVAN
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INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 1109

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 001328

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DEPT FOR EUR/CARC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/25/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PARM](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: GENERAL WARD TALKS FMF AND N-K WITH DEFMIN

Classified By: CDA A. F. Godfrey for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) EUCOM Deputy Commander General William Ward visited the GOAM's 12th Peacekeeping Battalion and the Ministry of Defense during his visit to Yerevan this week. He thanked Armenia for its contributions to KFOR and Operation Iraqi Freedom, and pushed both the commander of the peacekeeping battalion and Armenian Defense Minister Serzh Sargsian to consider additional deployments in support of international efforts and more training for non-commissioned officers (NCOs). Sargsian made a pitch to restart the flow of Foreign Military Financing (FMF) money allocated to Armenia. He also noted that Armenia's ability to reform its military was limited, saying that, if Armenia pulled its soldiers out of the trench positions along the line of contact, Azerbaijani forces would overrun those positions within hours. The General's visit was a great public diplomacy success, and was also useful in our effort to convince the GOAM to expand its peacekeeping contributions. END SUMMARY.

GENERAL VISITS DEFMIN

¶2. (C) Because General Ward's visit took place during the final day of Armenia's third worldwide Diaspora Conference, President Kocharian was not available. Defense Minister Sargsian rolled out the red carpet, however, and hosted General Ward's delegation to a lavish dinner. During their official meeting, the General thanked Sargsian for Armenia's contribution to the international operations in Iraq and Kosovo. He asked the Defense Minister to support sending four Armenian NCOs to Warrior Leader Training in Germany for International Military Education and Training (IMET)-funded training, stressing that such training is key both for the development of the Armenian military, and for its interoperability with NATO forces. General Ward also encouraged Sargsian to ensure that the military makes good use of its IMET-trained NCOs and officers by giving them meaningful jobs.

DEFMIN COMPLAINS ABOUT SLOW FMF ALLOCATION

¶3. (C) Sargsian told General Ward that he understood, reluctantly, that Armenia's FMF request to purchase communications equipment did not meet guidelines. Sargsian told Ward he was disappointed that the USD 11 million it had been granted between 2004 and 2006 was not yet obligated. Sargsian told General Ward that, once the FMF plan for

peacekeeping battalion equipment was finalized and the equipment arrived, the GOAM would be able to increase its contribution to the international coalition in Iraq by as much as 50 percent. He also said the GOAM intended to expand the battalion into a full brigade. Charge d'Affaires and ODC chief interjected with updates on new agreements with the MOD to commit these funds, but Sargsian was irritated by the interference in his pitch to the General.

DEFMIN TALKS N-K

¶4. (C) Sargsian told the General that, much as the GOAM would like to step up the pace to reform its military, it could not do so fully as long as the possibility of renewed conflict with Azerbaijan remained a national security threat. He said that 80 percent of the Armenian military is involved in "daily vigilance" in trench positions in Nagorno Karabakh. "If we don't man trenches for five hours, the Azeris will take them," he said. Sargsian said the GOAM could not divert its full attention to training and reform. General Ward said he understood Armenia's positions, but said the U.S. learned in World War I that trenches were not necessarily a guarantee against attack.

PEACEKEEPING BATTALION HQ SPRUCED UP FOR GENERAL'S VISIT

¶5. (C) Before meeting with Sargsian, General Ward visited the downtown headquarters of the 12th Peacekeeping Battalion. After the General reviewed several platoons, he met with the battalion commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Tonoyan, in a building that had clearly been repainted and varnished for

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the General's visit. Tonoyan discussed in detail the positions of Armenian forces in Kosovo and Iraq, and introduced the General to several soldiers who had received IMET military training. Soldiers also gave the General a tour of their English language center, walked him through tables of weapons, uniforms, and other equipment, and presented a slideshow of Armenian military deployments to Kosovo and Iraq. Battalion members clearly appreciated the General's easy manner and obvious enthusiasm.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) From a public diplomacy perspective, the General's visit was very successful. The commander and soldiers of the peacekeeping battalion were clearly thrilled at his visit. The General's encouragement of NCO training and expansion of the peacekeeping battalion was also a useful reinforcement of our efforts here at post to press the GOAM to increase their contribution to international peacekeeping efforts and coalition operations.

GODFREY